

Observer Report
Planning and Development Committee
July 23, 2007

Observer: Nancy Bashook

Aldermen Present/Absent: Moran, Wynn, Wollin, Bernstein, Tisdahl, Holmes, Rainey. Hansen and Jean-Baptiste absent.

Staff Present: Wolinski, Donna Spicuzza, Ms. Washington, Herb Hill, Planning Dept. Staff.

Media Present: Roundtable,

Meeting began: 7:10 pm

Meeting ended: 8:40 pm

Items for Consideration

(P1) Ordinance 27-O-07 – Text Amendment to Create a Mixed Use Zoning District (MUE)

Consideration of the findings and report of the Plan Commission to eliminate the existing transitional manufacturing districts and create one new mixed use zoning district call MUE. Per the discussion of the Planning & Development Committee at the July 9 meeting, the current text amendment will not eliminate the existing MUE district, but instead will create another district in the Transitional Manufacturing Districts section of the Zoning Ordinance, to be labeled MXE, Mixed Use Employment. A revised draft ordinance is transmitted herewith.

Ald. Rainey proposed an amendment to the ordinance that classifies educational institutions, religious institutions, community centers and cultural facilities as special use. Amendment unanimously approved.

Ordinance approved with amendment

(P2) Ordinance 28-O-07 – Plan Commission Recommendation for a Zoning Map Amendment

Consideration of the findings and report of the Plan Commission to rezone areas currently within the current MU and MUE transitional manufacturing zoning districts into the MUE mixed use zoning district. At the July 9, 2007 Planning & Development Committee meeting, the amendment was revised to exclude remapping of the existing MUE district along Custer Avenue between Greenleaf and Main Streets. This area will maintain its existing MUE designation. A revised map of the proposed MXE districts is transmitted herewith.

Unanimously approved.

(P3) Request for Additional \$126,865 in HOME Funds for ECDA's Condo Conversion at 736-38 Dobson

Consideration of the recommendation from the Housing Commission to approve the request from Evanston Community Development Association (ECDA) for additional HOME subsidy for costs not included in the original development budget for the 6-unit condominium conversion and rehab project at 736-38 Dobson, increasing the total subsidy from \$360,000 to \$486,865 or approximately \$81,000 per unit.

The Council approved \$360,000 a few months ago. The building codes changed and now require that all condo conversions have a sprinkler system. ECDA wants to be reimbursed \$126,000 for a fire suppression system.

Ald. Rainey asked for an accounting of all costs for the project, which total over \$1,000,000. She said the units are lovely, but the basement is terrible, with old washing machines, etc., the hallways are not refurbished, and it doesn't present like a \$270,000 unit. This is a very expensive project, and she wonders if it is affordable to provide affordable housing.

A representative from EDCA, a faith based organization of African-American churches, explained that the organization usually meets in Fisher Memorial Church. He, along with the architect, explained why the pipes are exposed over every apartment (Ald. Rainey said this looks terrible). The fire department requires that the pipes be placed there so that they can easily accessed. Ald. Rainey requested a memo from the Fire Department about this installation.

Unanimously approved.

(P4) Ordinance 76-O-07 – special Use Request for a Type 2 Restaurant (Café Enterprise) at 1840 Oak Avenue

Consideration of the Zoning Board of Appeals recommendation to approve the application by Dr. Mark Rosenbloom, on behalf of the Evanston Enterprise Center, LLC, for a special use to establish a type 2 restaurant at 1840 Oak Avenue. The applicant proposed to expand the operation of the existing type 1 restaurant to include carry-out and delivery business.

All type 1 restaurants do carryout business. The concern is the percent of total business that is carryout. The impact of this is covered by Type 2 restaurants. Wollin expressed concern about parking for deliveries. A parking lot in front of building, with six or seven spaces, can be used.

Unanimously approved.

(PD1) Zoning Vested Rights Discussion

It is clear that a higher threshold than a zoning analysis is necessary for determining which development proposals are included in a moratorium. Herb Hill explained legal opinion, which states that a vested rights analysis needs to be done on a case-by-case basis. At the time of a moratorium, an analysis needs to be done of what is happening in the area, and other factors to help make a decision. Circumstances differ in each case, so it is impossible to have a blanket resolution in place. Ald. Wynne said this politicizes every moratorium. There was lots of discussion on what the threshold should be and what is required for a zoning analysis. No action on this item.

(PD2) Discussion of Proposed Downpayment Assistance program and Vacant Building Program

Discuss preliminary guidelines for two housing program proposals to be funded through the HOME program and the City's Affordable Housing Fund. The Downpayment Assistance Program would provide forgivable grants to individuals for the purchase of a home in Evanston. The Vacant Building Program would provide combination grants and loans to developers to rehab and resell vacant buildings as affordable housing.

Wolinski said that this is all about helping first-time home buyers purchase homes with a downpayment system. Dona Spicuzza explained the programs. (Attached are outlines of the two programs).

Discussion of the Vacant Building Program focused on how many vacant buildings there are in Evanston (approximately 50). A handful of these are targeted for immediate action, needing little rehabilitation. About 25 need substantial rehabilitation. Some are for sale; the status of others is unknown. Ald. Rainey requested more information on the buildings and suggested that this might not be the best way to spend affordable housing money. It could be too expensive. Issue of ownership is a problem. Banks have not been responsive. Quick money is needed for acquisition of properties; then banks might be interested.

If city administers the program, HOME funds cannot be committed until each project is identified. If the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) takes this over, it would be easier. Because there is not enough staff power to do all the required research, it was suggested that CHDO do this. Betty Ester suggested that guidelines for these programs be put on the internet to inform the community about the funds and give people an opportunity to comment. Her organization is prepared to get the information out to the community.

Aldermen requested that an ordinance for the Downpayment Assistance program be presented at the next meeting and that more information on the ownership status and physical condition of vacant buildings be reported at that time.